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April 26, 2005

TO : Gerry Scott

FROM : Dennis Lee

SUBJECT: First quarter (2005) observer coverage summary.

The Pelagic Observer Program (POP) achieved a 8.2% coverage rate for the first quarter period of 2005 (January 1 to March 31). Selection letters were sent by certified mail service (return receipt) on December 15, 2004 to 34 vessel permit holders (owners and/or operators) for notification of observer coverage. Of those mailed, the program office the returned cards showing proof of delivery. The POP had the responsibility of the regular coverage requirement in the Northwest Atlantic, including the Gulf of Mexico, and the Caribbean Sea.

Of special note, there were two (2) vessels (Bjorn II and Dakota) in which coverage began in quarter 4 (2004) and carried over into 2005 (Table 1). Additionally, another vessel (Cecilla II) selected in quarter 4, but finally began coverage on January 2 of 2005. For the purposes of this quarterly report, any vessel effort observed during the first quarter period (number of sets observed, days at-sea, animals caught) will be included in this summary. Of the 19 vessels selected and observed for quarter 1, four made second trips to complete their minimum effort requested. Overall, observers spent 267 days at sea, which resulted in 178 sets observed and a coverage rate of 8.2%. During the 26 observed trips (Table 1), set effort occurred in the geographical areas of the Caribbean Sea (CAR), the Gulf of Mexico (GOM), the Florida East Coast (FEC), the South Atlantic Bight (SAB), the Mid-Atlantic Bight (MAB), and the North Central Atlantic (NCA).

Of the pelagic longline trips covered by observers under the 8% fleet requirement, a total of 132,479 hooks were fished during the 178 sets recorded by the SEFSC program. The total catch from the 26 pelagic longline trips observed consisted of 4,073 fish representing 44 species of fish. The catch data was comprised of 1,667 swordfish, 104 bigeye tuna, 639 yellowfin tuna, 39 bluefin tuna, 53 albacore tuna, 141 other tuna species, 52 dolphin fish (mahi), 19 wahoo, 69 billfish species, 619 other finfish (escolar,

lancetfish, etc.), 119 skates/rays, 3 small coastal sharks, 330 large coastal sharks, 198 pelagic sharks, and 21 unidentified fish species. During the quarter, observers also recorded incidental takes of protected species (Table 2) which included two(2) marine mammals (1-Risso's dolphin-alive, 1-bottlenose dolphin-alive), 16 sea turtles (9 leatherback-alive; 7 loggerhead-alive), and two (2) sea birds (1 Herring Gull-dead and 1 Shearwater-dead).

Although occasional communications by telephone and faxes do occur from owners of selected vessels prior to and during the quarter, in general, my staff and I continue to have to place calls to most of the vessel owners to determine fishing activities and port location of the vessels. My recommendation is for the SEFSC to suggest to the HMS-HQ office to send periodic notices via fax distribution as reminders to vessel permit holders of their responsible for contacting the POP office of their fishing activity when selected. Until this action is supported, much of the staff time will always be committed to calling marinas, fish dealers, and/or leaving messages on phone recorders in hopes of locating the vessels.

During the quarter, the POP did not place observers on 15 of the 34 vessels selected (44%; Table 3), thus reducing the target coverage of the POP office by 69 sets. One vessel, F/V Fortuna II, was under repairs in January and the owner's fishing activity is dependent upon weather. During many of the communications, the POP office was unable to assign an observer to accommodate his activities during the quarter. There were eight (8) vessels in which the owners reported their vessels as not fishing or involved in another fishery. The remaining six selected vessels listed in Table 3 as not participating were due to non-communication, lack of bunk space, and/or not possessing a current CFVSE decal. This reduced the POP's coverage opportunities by 35 sets. Lack of communication with our office and lack of marine safety decals still affects our program the most in any quarterly coverage. In addition, observer accommodations or liferaft can have an impact. With these excuses from owners re-occurring each quarter and with many of the same vessels on a regular basis, my staff continues to emphasize that the Agency should seek other alternatives of collecting data from these vessels if regular participation in observer coverage cannot be enforced for the permit holder. Fortunately this quarter, many of the vessels that were covered provided more sets than were requested in the selection letters which allowed the POP to attain the 8% coverage.

In closing, neither the Turtle Take Estimates (TTE) nor the Net Mortality Ratio (NMR) mentioned in the 2004 Biological Opinion (BO) are provided in this report as the POP does not have the staffing expertise to conduct these analyses. In addition, the POP recorded no sawfish catches during the quarter; this species is not likely to occur in the pelagic environment. Although turtle handling workshops are being scheduled at various ports, observers

have also been instructed to share their expertise of using the turtle handling gear. Additionally, on August 5, 2004, the NOAA-Fisheries implemented the regulations for vessels to have the turtle handling and release gear on board. Shortly after that date, the POP observers were provided a turtle gear checklist form issued by the Miami PR and given instructions to review the gear on each boat, fill out the checklist forms, and submit the forms with their data at the completion of the trip. In keeping with the BO reporting requirements from the POP office, observers filled out the turtle gear forms on 20 of the first quarter selected vessels. Following two industry organized turtle gear workshops held in February and April of 2005, the presence of this gear required by the BO appears to be improving. Of the 20 vessels selected and observed in quarter 1, 90% (n=18) of the vessels had both the equipment needed for removing gear from turtles in the water (at least 3 of 4 items aboard), as well as most of the equipment for removing gear if the turtle is boated (6 or more items aboard). Interestingly, 70% of the selected vessels also had the turtle tether aboard, which is voluntary at this time. A PDF document of the observer turtle gear forms will be posted on a secure site of the POP website. Finally, the cumulative number of unique vessels observed since the effective date of the sea turtle conservation regulations (July, 2004), now stands at 55 vessels covered (Table 4).

Attachments:

Tables 1,2,3, and 4.

cc: Cheryl Brown, POP files; Gregg Houghaboom, NOAA-Fisheries
SERO/OLE liaison.

Table 1: Regular coverage (8%) of the longline fleet. Number of vessels observed, areas of fishing activity, total sets observed, and total days at-sea conducted by the SEFSC Miami Laboratory **POP** from January 1 to March 31, 2005.

Vessel Number	Vessel Name	Trip No.	Area	Total Sets	Total Sea Days
947927 ¹	BJORN II	D04014	SAB	6	5**
956008 ¹	DAKOTA	C02028	MAB	5	6**
936041 ¹	CECILIA II	P01106	GOM	9	16
682221	SEA HAWK	M01030	CAR/NCA	10/5	25**
929437	ST BENEDICT	Q02048	GOM	6	12
510728	MISS SUZANNE	W01044	MAB	5	9
650401	SHARON G II	J02034	MAB	2	6
643282	OUTLAW	I02025	GOM	2	3
586413	HATUNA MATADA	A02017	GOM	8	12
510728	MISS SUZANNE	W01045	MAB	3	7
600048	KIM THANH II	C02029	GOM	5	8
643282	OUTLAW	I02026	GOM/FEC	2/2	5
606059	DEESIE	J02035	GOM	9	14**
690722	SOUTHERN LADY	S01064	FEC	10	13**
596805	MARY ANN	I02027	SAB	7	10**
904300	KIM NHI	A02018	GOM	9	12**
937416	KIM THANH	P01107	GOM	9	12
610006	CAPT MICHAEL	Q02049	GOM	1	4
1029384	OUR LADY OF LAVANG	W01046	GOM	9	12
650401	SHARON G II	D04015	MAB	6	8
508393	GRAND CRU	I02028	FEC	4	5
923317	SEA QUEEN	C02030	GOM	11	16**
902659	NIGHT STAR II	P01108	GOM	9	12**
610006	CAPT MICHAEL	Q02050	GOM	7	11**
609121	CAROL ANN	D04016	GOM	12	14
911431	CAPT DAVID	M01031	GOM	5	10**
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	TOTAL			178	267

Footnotes:

** INCIDENTAL TAKE

1 Quarter 4 selected vessels with effort occurring in 1st quarter, 2005.

Table 2: Percent coverage (by sets), the incidental take of Protected Resource species (turtles, mammals, seabirds), and hook effort summarized by geographical area for January 1 to March 31, 2005. (A=Alive, D=Dead, LB=Leatherback, LH=Loggerhead, U=unknown)

AREA	TOTAL SETS OBSERVED	REQUIRED 8% COVERAGE	TURTLES A LB/LH/U	D	MAMMALS A	D	BIRDS A	D
CAR-1	10(4%)	19	0/ 2/0	0	0	0	0	0
GOM-2	113(9%)	95	6/ 2/0	0	1	0	0	0
FEC-3	16(5%)	23	3/ 0/0	0	0	0	0	0
SAB-4	13(6%)	17	0/ 2/0	0	1	0	0	2
MAB-5	21(21%)	8	0/ 1/0	0	0	0	0	0
OFF-8&9	5(3%)	12	0/ 0/0	0	0	0	0	0
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TOTAL	178(8+%)	174	9/ 7/0	0	2	0	0	2

Hook effort Summary:

<u>Area</u>	<u>Hook effort</u>
CAR	8,112
GOM	90,348
FEC	9,034
SAB	8,618
MAB	12,287
NCA	<u>4,080</u>
TOTAL	132,479

Note: OFF means Offshore waters combining areas 8 and 9 (SAR and NCA).

Table 3: Listing of vessels that were not covered by Pelagic Observer Program (POP) during quarter 1, 2005 (January 1 to March 31). Short explanations provided. Vessel non-compliance of observer coverage may be based on more than one category of explanation. The following categories are provided: (1)No bunk available;(2)Observer presence exceeds the liferaft capacity;(3) Lack of current CFVSE decal; (4)No communication with observer office/staff; (5)Not fishing (involved in another fishery);(6)Not fishing (new owner, repair, sunk, no permits); and (7)other safety concerns.

<u>Vessel Name</u>	<u>Doc #</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
BETTE BOOP	673527	Reasons 3, 4 and 6. Certified was received. Owner did not communicate with POP office during quarter. CFVSE decal not current. Vessel was found to have various deficiencies. Owner indicated in previous quarter he had no captain or crew and vessel was up for sale. POP requested 4 sets for the quarter. Logbook submission: No landings. No fishing reports submitted 1/05 and 2/05.
BLUEFIN	597797	Reason 6. Certified letter received. Owner called the POP office on 2/1/05 indicating he had no captain or crew and vessel was not fishing until further notice. POP requested 2 sets for the quarter. Logbook submissions: No landings. No fishing reports submitted 1/05 and 2/05.
FORTUNA II	919844	Reason 5. Certified letter received by Fed Ex. Owner called POP office on 1/20. Vessel under major repair. Vessel fishing shark directed. POP was unable to schedule observer coverage, but only 2 sets were required for quarter. Logbook submissions:1/05, 2/08, 2/16, 2/22, 3,19, and3/28.

Table 3 (continued): Listing of vessels that were not covered by Pelagic Observer Program (POP) during quarter 1, 2005 (January 1 to March 31). Short explanations provided. Vessel non-compliance of observer coverage may be based on more than one category of explanation. The following categories are provided: (1)No bunk available;(2)Observer presence exceeds the liferaft capacity;(3) Lack of current CFVSE decal; (4)No communication with observer office/staff; (5)Not fishing (involved in another fishery);(6)Not fishing (new owner, repair, sunk, no permits); and (7)other safety concerns.

<u>Vessel Name</u>	<u>Doc #</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
KELLY ANN	633432	Reasons 4 and 6. Certified letter received. No communication with POP office. Other sources indicated vessel was without crew and not fishing. Pop requested 6 sets for quarter. Logbook submission: No fishing reports nor landings received.
LIBERTY	944957	Reason 5 Certified letter received. Owner notified in writing that vessel was involved in reef fish fishery. POP requested 4 sets for the quarter. Logbook submission: No landings. No fishing report submitted 1/05.
LINNEA C	665962	Reason 3. Certified letter received by Fed Ex. POP office received calls from the owner on 1/26/05, 3/4/05, and 3/10/05. Owner very cooperative with POP. Scheduled observer trip in late March, but VMS pulled by OLE. VMS returned on 3/25/05, but vessel not fishing at that time. Safety decal issued in March, 2005. POP requested 9 sets during the quarter.

Table 3 (continued): Listing of vessels that were not covered by Pelagic Observer Program (POP) during quarter 1, 2005 (January 1 to March 31). Short explanations provided. Vessel non-compliance of observer coverage may be based on more than one category of explanation. The following categories are provided: (1)No bunk available; (2)Observer presence exceeds the liferaft capacity; (3)Lack of current CFVSE decal; (4)No communication with observer office/staff; (5)Not fishing (involved in another fishery); (6)Not fishing (new owner, repair, sunk, no permits); and (7) other safety concerns.

<u>Vessel Name</u>	<u>Doc #</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
LORI MARIE	674417	Reason 4. Letter received by Fed Ex. POP office received no communications from owner during quarter. Owner selected in last 3 quarters with same results. POP requested 2 sets for quarter. Logbook submission: No fishing reports nor landings received.
MASTER RAY	669893	Reason (none). Certified letter received. Owner sent written notice of 2/4/05 of a mid-March departure and made Louisiana observer aware that letter was received. POP was unable to provide observer during quarter. POP requested 4 sets for quarter. Logbook submission: 1/14, 2/3, 2/26, and 3/25
QUEENSLAND	926359	Reasons 3. Selection letter received. Owner communicated with POP office on 2/7 and 2/11. POP staff notified owner that CFVSE decal not current. Inspection made by CG but but failed due to decencies. POP requested 7 set for quarter. Logbook submission: 10/9, 11/2, and 11/17.

Table 3 (continued): Listing of vessels that were not covered by Pelagic Observer Program (POP) during quarter 1, 2005 (January 1 to March 31). Short explanations provided. Vessel non-compliance of observer coverage may be based on more than one category of explanation. The following categories are provided: (1)No bunk available; (2)Observer presence exceeds the liferaft capacity; (3)Lack of current CFVSE decal; (4)No communication with observer office/staff; (5)Not fishing (involved in another fishery); (6)Not fishing (new owner, repair, sunk, no permits); and (7)other safety concerns.

<u>Vessel Name</u>	<u>Doc #</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
SYLVIA JEAN	609788	Reason 4 and 6. Certified letter received. No communication with POP office. Other sources indicated vessel was without crew, up for sale, and not fishing. Pop requested 4 sets for quarter. Logbook submission: No fishing reports or landings received.
SOUTHERN STAR	1049623	Reason 6. Certified letter received. Owner had communications with POP office on 1/4, 1/5, 1/30, 2/4, and 2/7. Observer coverage scheduled for February, but owner decided not fish remainder of quarter. Pop requested 8 sets for quarter. Logbook submission: No fishing reports or landings received.
ST. JOSEPH&PETER	911631	Reasons 3 and 4. Certified letter received by Fed Ex. Owner had no communications with POP office. CG/MSO officer indicated vessel could not pass safety inspection due to deficiencies. POP requested 5 sets for quarter. Logbook submissions: 1/28, 2/28, and 3/16.

Table 3 (continued): Listing of vessels that were not covered by Pelagic Observer Program (POP) during quarter 1, 2005 (January 1 to March 31). Short explanations provided. Vessel non-compliance of observer coverage may be based on more than one category of explanation. The following

categories are provided: (1)No bunk available; (2)Observer presence exceeds the liferaft capacity; (3)Lack of current CFVSE decal; (4)No communication with observer office/staff; (5)Not fishing (involved in another fishery); (6)Not fishing (new owner, repair, sunk, no permits); and (7) other safety concerns.

<u>Vessel Name</u>	<u>Doc #</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
STRAIGHT FLUSH	663691	Reasons 3. Certified letter received by Fed Ex. Owner had communications with POP office on 3/3, 3/5, 3/11, and 3/22. Observer sent to vessel. Delayed in getting Safety decal inspection while observer present at dock. POP staff reassigned observer following safety concerns. POP requested 1 set for quarter. POP will not place observer on this vessel. Logbook submission: 1/25, 1/28, 2/02, 2/28, and 2/21.
VITAMIN SEA	671127	Reason 5. Certified letter received. Owner made no contact with the POP office during the quarter. Owner has commented in past quarter that he is unwilling to clear out bunk being used for storage. Assumes he is incapable to take observer due to space. POP requested 4 sets for quarter. Logbook submission: reef fish logs only.

Table 3 (continued): Listing of vessels that were not covered by Pelagic Observer Program (POP) during quarter 1, 2005 (January 1 to March 31). Short explanations provided. Vessel non-compliance of observer coverage may be based on more than one category of explanation. The following categories are provided: **(1)**No bunk available; **(2)**Observer presence exceeds the liferaft capacity; **(3)**Lack of current CFVSE decal; **(4)**No communication with observer office/staff; **(5)**Not fishing (involved in another fishery); **(6)**Not fishing (new owner, repair, sunk, no permits); and **(7)** other safety concerns.

<u>Vessel Name</u>	<u>Doc #</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
WHITE WATER II	902748	Reason 5. Certified letter received. Owner communicated with the POP office on 1/04 and 2/18. Vessel made two longline trips before converting to handline fishery. POP office received no advance information of departures to schedule coverage. POP requested 7 sets for quarter. Logbook submission: Longline: 1/23 and 2/03. Handline:2/28, 3/08, 3/23, and 3/28.

Table 4: The POP coverage completed aboard the pelagic longline fleet by quarter and year since the publication of the 2004 Biological Opinion. The number of trips observed include vessels that are covered multiple times during a quarter. The number of unique vessels observed represents those vessels only covered once by an observer during a quarter and year.

Quarter	Year	No. of Vessels Selected	No. of Trips Observed	No. of Unique Vessels Observed
3	2004	44	29	29
4	2004	30	28	14
1	2005	34	26	12
Cumulative Totals			83	55
